

November 4, 2005  
Springfield, Mo

Sharon Tubbs  
Director of Economic Development  
City of Salem  
400 N Iron St  
Salem, Missouri  
573-729-2428  
[economic@salemmo.com](mailto:economic@salemmo.com)

Salem is a small community of 5,000 people with a county population of 15,000 located near the population center of the nation. It is a place where rural Missouri takes on the real meaning of 'quality of life'. Outdoor recreational opportunities, clean streams and open skies are plentiful. However, economic opportunities are very limited.

- ▶ There is an overriding challenge to create a growing economy and stable community.
- ▶ Per capita incomes of \$20,208 are well below the average for the state and nation.
- ▶ Our community strives to improve and experience economic growth.

Salem was designated a **Champion Community in 1995** by Rural Development. The community has worked diligently to achieve goals that were outlined in community planning efforts:

- Increased continuing education opportunities
- Better-trained labor force
- Quality job opportunities
- Enhanced tourism development
- Improved infrastructure

The community has achieved many of these objectives. Southwest Baptist University combined resources with local partners to build a satellite campus in Salem. Enrollments average over 200 students each semester. A state-of-the art Telecommunications Resource Center opened through the joint efforts of local businesses, City of Salem and the University of Missouri. The center connects Salem with the rest of the world by two-way interactive video and audio conferencing, and offers credit and non-credit courses in our community.

Since one our greatest asset is **'the rural area in which we live'**- clean streams, open country, canoeing, hunting, fishing, hiking/biking, **marketing these to potential visitors is important.** We work diligently to enhance tourism development efforts and make our community **a place where people want to live and work.**

USDA Rural Development has been **our partner** in addressing major priority issues. Financial assistance from a **Rural Business Opportunity Grant was used to develop tourism.** A citizens committee planned and implemented a major marketing program after completing an inventory of resources, and inviting businesses and individual citizens to give their input. Tourism is key to our future. As new people visit our area, many often decide that it is a great place to return, to make it their permanent home and/or business. **Investments** from local residents or from those outside of the community help it to grow.  
(over)

USDA has **invested** in the Salem and Dent County Community. Assistance provided for the development of community facilities:

1. A visible and up to date **Visitor Center**,
2. An adjoining **Farmer's Market Facility**,
3. A **Teacher's Resource Closet** for needed supplies for school classrooms.

We completed these projects successfully and developed a fourth facility, a Natural and Cultural Resource Center on the same campus site. The combined USDA funds, local contributions of time, money and supplies were used to complete these projects. It resulted in a highly **visible visitor and resource information multi-complex**, a very **successful farmers market**, and a facility for housing needed **classroom materials** not supplied by public school budgets. It, also, **convinced citizens that their efforts and resources combined with USDA-rural development funds do make a difference.**

The tourism grant provided resources to create up-to-date quality promotional materials for these facilities to use. Funds were, also, used to enhance our website that describes our community to the world and as well as other marketing efforts.

USDA provided assistance to Dent County and the City of Salem to **build roads to access major industries**. Daisy BB Manufacturing and Salem Wood Products, two significant industries in Salem, are more readily accessible because of these infrastructure improvements. Rural Development helped build roads in the new Commons or Fair Grounds area. This area provides a place for competitive events, horse shows, rodeos, fairs, livestock barns, and building for youth development programs in the community. An estimated 35,000 people attended activities in this new facility in 2004.

USDA Rural Development serves as a **catalyst and supporter**. It has created the **enthusiasm needed to make our community come alive**. Missouri Community Betterment Program awarded the Salem community first place in community betterment for towns of 4,000-5,000 population in the state.

Salem wants to take this opportunity to thank USDA for providing the assistance necessary to reach many of our top priority goals. Again, USDA has been the engine that helped **our rural community grow**. More important, they are our **partner because they invested in our community**. **Continued support is essential, if we are going to improve the income level of citizens in our community.**

Projects described, could not have been completed, without the assistance of Rural Development. Not only, was Rural Development able to help us meet our targeted goals but it was completed in a **very user-friendly manner**. "Less hassle, less government bureaucracy, and a customer friendly attitude" is the way I would describe my experience, in working with Rural Development Programs. Projects have been objective driven, clearly outlined and implemented. USDA has been the best government partner I have worked with in my forty years of working with the public.